

Book Review Department

SOCIAL REALITIES AND THE SOCIAL WORK RESPONSE: THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS OF SOCIAL WORK, Proceedings of the XVIIIth International Congress of Schools of Social Work. New York: International Association of Schools of Social Work, 1977.

I often tell my students to read a book for "what turns you on or what applications you can make of the content". The reader will find much in this slim volume (173 pp.) that is both provocative and useful. Divided into three sections — plenary papers, regional reports, and summaries of the issues discussed at the 1976 meetings in San Juan, the book opens with an analysis of international social realities by Eugene Pusic that is guaranteed to be disquieting. The former president of the International Conference on Social Welfare and the Dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of Zagreb discusses the classic dilemma; building a professional and technical competence based on scientific knowledge while maintaining a day to day commitment to compassion and tolerance.

Against the background of world patterns of inequality and the naked exploitation of millions and of impending disaster as the world sits on a stockpile of 3000 tons of plutonium, itself the product of scientific knowledge, he cautions us not to build social work education on a one-sided commitment to scientific objectivity. Today's social realities call for taking sides, making moral choices, committing ourselves to acts of courage. He concludes with a veiled criticism of our welfare institutions. Pusic has played the role of social critic, agent provocateur, visionary and prophet exceedingly well. But he leaves the reader unsatisfied. While he has "turned us on", I'm not certain that what he has given us would be useful without the paper that follows.

Agreeing with Pusic's commitment to risk taking and morale choice, Jona Rosenfeld, in the second plenary paper, approaches his task from a different perspective. Director of the Paul Baerwald School of Social Work of the Hebrew University in Israel, Prof. Rosenfeld uses his unique vantage point in an examination of the universal and the particular in social work education. What is universal is a commitment to the humanization of society and the fostering of the well being and development of individuals in those societies. But these very concepts provide a challenge to social work education. The interpretation of these values differs in each society and often within a particular society. For this reason, he points out, it is not enough to teach the knowledge and skill needed to intervene according to professionally sound principles, one must also free the intervenor

to "invent interventions", to innovate in response to particular circumstances.

In his comments on Rosenfeld's paper Yukani Nyrienda Zambia cautions against too easy acceptance of a universal base for social work education, pointing out that much of it may be the left-overs of the technical assistance preferred to developing nations following the era of colonialism. Lila deMateo Alonso of Venezuela levels the charge that social work may itself lead to a new form of exploitation by supporting existing power structures and the economic interests of ruling classes, using her comments to espouse a radical position, more than as an opportunity to comment on Rosenfeld's paper.

Eight regional reports follow. One might expect these to be rather bland considering the enormous amounts of material to be covered. Not so. Mukhtar I. M. Agouba, formerly executive director of the Association for Social Work Education in Africa, provides the reader with a great number of examples of innovations in educational practice in his region. He describes: student initiated client involvement in the Sudan; the research emphasis in Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Mauritius, Ghana; training courses for volunteers in Nigeria and Tanzania; and other new efforts related to rural development policy, population planning elsewhere.

The reports of other locales are no less comprehensive. Of interest is the remarkable range of innovations peculiar to some regions and sub-regions: community education in Asia; extra-mural training for new workers in the Caribbean; the involvement of Puerto Rican students in political action. There seems to be a new conversion of interests in other regions. These include: a growing concern with the impact of professionalization on client-orientation expressed in some European countries; attempts to reconceptualize social work and social work education in both economic and socio-political terms in South America; a comparable radicalization or anti-professionalism being expressed in Canada; a response by social work education in the United States to the challenges posed by increasingly vocal groups — feminists, racial minorities, and others who consider themselves disenfranchised or discriminated against. It is my impression that these reports show the developed nations converging in their agreement on what is

universal in social work; while developing nations are somewhat more prone to seek their own patterns in response to particular situations. Despite the diversities expressed, a remarkable consensus seems to prevail.

It is a consensus that may draw less from a fully agreed upon knowledge base and technology (what we have come to recognize as the hall marks of a profession) and more from a moral commitment to deal with the consequences of some of the social realities Pusic mentions. The document attests to the fact that social work and social work education does promote the invention of interventions advocated by Rosenfeld. But the efforts in this direction may be too timid, as some educators play it safe. For

those who are willing to take risks, there will be much in this volume that turns them on, and not a little that they might find applicable in their work.

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CROSS-CULTURAL LEARNING AND SELF-GROWTH,
International Association of Schools of Social
Social Work, 1977. Pp. xii + 121. US\$6.00.

Mildred Sikkema and Agnes M. Niyekawa-Howard.
Work and the University of Hawaii School of

This book compares and assesses three types of cross-cultural learning programmes undertaken by students of the School of Social Work of the University of Hawaii, first in Guam and later in Molokai (an essentially rural island in the Hawaiian group) and Honolulu. One of the significant objectives of the whole project was to give an opportunity for divergent thinking in an educational process of culture-learning wherein the students were to risk themselves, to take chances, and be prepared for unexpected and possibly negative outcomes. In this project, of which the three programmes were a part, students learned how to learn another culture, to develop a sensitivity to cues in any culture with which they came into contact, rather than to learn the specifics of a culture. This meant functioning for a time in an uncomfortable and ambiguous situation where a student's own cultural framework was of no use, and "culture shock" had to be lived through until a new framework was structured by the student himself. The authors considered that learning to tolerate and cope with ambiguities until one knows more about the situation would have a generalizable effect, both on learning the new culture and on the personal development of the learner. The underlying assumption of the project was that professional education for social work should stimulate "an active understanding of cultural differences and encourage graduates to deal with these cultural differences as they now deal with individual differences". The project, in sum, was to prepare Social Workers who could function effectively in any culture or sub-culture, inside or

outside their own, and to help them to become more flexible and creative through experiential learning. This book is very practical and has international value.

The core of culture learning, in the view of the authors, is experiential learning. However, the experience of the project was deliberately designed to be unstructured. Students had no definite role to play, in the foreign culture, they were not sent to provide a social service, or to carry out research. Minimum training specific to the culture in which they were to be immersed was given. Indeed, a built-in ambiguity in the new culture characterized the project. The students had only the humble role of learner, "with everybody in the culture a potential teacher from whom he could learn".

The project provided for both cognitive and experiential learning opportunities. A pre-training seminar held at the home School of Social Work emphasized cognitive learning when a student was helped to become consciously aware of his own culture in order to see it in relation to another culture or sub-culture. The field experience in another culture offered exposure sufficient to disorganize customary comfortable values, patterns of thought, and behaviour. Following the field experience an opportunity was given to provide for integration and a conscious formulation and use of the learning at an integration seminar. Chapters 2 and 3 of the book explain the theoretical bases for, and the methodology of the project. Chapters 4 and 5 give fascinating details of the